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STATE FOR WHA/BSC, INL FOR AL MATANO
JUSTICE FOR OIA/AFMILS, AND NDDS
TREASURY FOR FINCEN
DEA FOR OILS AND OFFICE OF DIVERSION CONTROL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR PREL PGOV AR
SUBJECT: STAFFDEL MACKEY EXAMINES ARGENTINE NARCOTICS
SITUATION

¶1. (U) This cable is sensitive but unclassified, and not for Internet distribution.

Summary

¶2. (SBU) House Committee on International Relations (HIRC) Senior Counsel John Mackey and HIRC Democratic Deputy Chief Counsel Paul Oostburg Sanz traveled to Argentina January 10-13 to investigate the flow of narcotics out of the Andean region, through Argentina, to the U.S. and Europe. The Staffdel concluded that the drug problem in Argentina is going to get worse before it gets better, especially considering the possibility of a weakening Bolivian commitment to combating cocaine production and shipment. The Staffdel also concluded that Europe needs to be more involved in fighting the drug war on this side of the Atlantic, and that Argentine law enforcement officials should be sent as students to the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in El Salvador. End Summary.

Who, When, and Why

¶3. (SBU) House Committee on International Relations Senior Counsel John Mackey and HIRC Democratic Deputy Chief Counsel Paul Oostburg Sanz traveled to Argentina January 10-13 to investigate the flow of narcotics out of the Andean region, through Argentina, to the U.S. and Europe. The Staffdel met with high-ranking officials from the MFA and the Argentine Gendarmeria, and received extensive Embassy briefings. (Note: The Staffdel also focused on the status of the current investigation into the 1994 Jewish Community Center (AMIA) terrorist bombing. That element of the trip is reported septel.)

Gendarmeria's Anti-Drug Chief Paints Worrisome Picture

¶4. (SBU) The Staffdel discussed the regional narcotics situation during a January 11 meeting with Gendarmeria anti-narcotics chief General Eduardo Maiztegui and his staff.

The Gendarmeria is the federal force tasked with securing Argentina's land borders, and as such has major anti-drug responsibilities. Despite continuing budget limitations that have hampered investment in training and equipment, the Argentine Gendarmeria's cooperation with the USG on anti-narcotics initiatives has been excellent.

¶5. (SBU) Maiztegui began by extolling the relationship his agency has developed with the Embassy, and Mackey responded by asking whether the Gendarmeria enjoyed similar cooperation with the European nations to which almost all the cocaine transiting Argentina is destined. Maiztegui described limited cooperation with Italy and France, but said it was not close to the scale or effectiveness of the Gendarmeria's work with U.S. agencies. With cocaine seizures in Argentina at a ten-year high, indicating a significant increase in volume heading to Europe, Maiztegui said that he would appreciate greater European involvement in anti-narcotics work in Argentina.

¶6. (SBU) Argentina is not a major drug-producing country, Maiztegui said, and most of the narcotics found in the country come from Bolivia. Maiztegui expressed concern that political developments in Bolivia could translate into a larger drug transit problem for Argentina. Mackey cautioned Maiztegui that transit countries quickly develop into user countries, and Maiztegui admitted that he believes Argentine consumption of narcotics has risen, especially in the interior of the country in what were previously drug-free areas, but there are no national statistics to confirm his

suspicions. Maiztegui said that smugglers who take illegal drugs through Argentina used to be paid in cash, but are now being paid in product with greater frequency, a change that inevitably results in greater local usage. The Gendarmeria are also capturing many more Colombian nationals than ever before, and those Colombians are generally connected to the heroin trade in the U.S., according to Maiztegui.

¶7. (SBU) Responding to Staffdel's query regarding the type of assistance that would be most helpful to his forces in their drug-fighting role, Maiztegui cited communications problems on the Bolivian border that could be ameliorated with better equipment. He also said that the training Gendarmeria most needs at the moment is for intelligence analysts. Mackey pointed out that such training was likely available at the International Law Enforcement Academy in El Salvador, and Maiztegui indicated a strong desire for assistance in sending personnel for training there.

MFA Sanguine on Bolivia

¶8. (SBU) The Staffdel met January 10 with MFA Undersecretary for Foreign Policy Ambassador Luis Cappagli and members of his staff. Mackey asked Cappagli for his views on Argentina's anti-drug cooperation with Bolivia, and Cappagli said that president-elect Morales' position on the issue was clear: he will tolerate the cultivation of the coca plant for traditional uses only, not to produce cocaine. Mackey pointed out that traditional uses are not what our countries have to worry about, but Office of Counterterrorism and Other Crimes Director Minister Marcelo Colombo Murua responded by saying those who produce cocaine are not Morales' people. The Staffdel mentioned the importance of keeping a careful watch on the number of cocaine labs being constructed in Argentina: an increase would spell trouble. Colombo Murua responded by saying that Argentina and Brazil will attempt to coordinate closely with Bolivia on counternarcotics.

Comment

¶9. (SBU) Argentine law enforcement appears more sensitive than the MFA to the threat posed by increasing amounts of narcotics transiting Argentina. All indications are that the drug problem in Argentina is going to get worse before it gets better, and it will likely require a more active European involvement as well as continued U.S.-Argentina cooperation to effect a positive change.

Staffdel Recommendation

¶10. (SBU) The Staffdel encourages the active and continuing participation of Argentine law enforcement personnel in the ILEA in El Salvador. Mackey further recommends that the ILEA build intelligence analysis training into its curriculum.

GUTIERREZ